

**Town of Hopkinton - Town Meeting 2020
Comments, Questions, and Amendments
Received Through Thursday, July 23, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.**

GENERAL COMMENTS

1. Dear Moderator Ellsworth,
Thank you very much to you, Mr. Cass, and the Select Board for the work and creativity that have gone into developing a process for Town Meeting during this public health crisis. I have consistently felt that our elected officials and Town employees have made every effort to maximize public participation. We are very lucky to have all of you at the helm.

I do not support additional amendments (beyond those proposed to by the Select Board) to the 2020 warrant. The Select Board has already done an outstanding job finding ways to save during difficult financial times.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Sarah Mattson Dustin
517 Dustin Road

2. Mr. Moderator:
Here are my responses relative to the Warrant as presented and discussed via the Zoom meeting on July 20,2020.

A. General Comments

1. For any discussion on Articles 5,6, and 7, address each Article individually. Do not consolidate them, as was done on July 20. Consolidation makes understanding and addressing difficult.
2. Hold speakers to the set time limit. Also, as has been custom at past in-person Town Meetings, instruct speakers to present new thoughts, comments, etc., and not to repeat information, comments, questions presented by previous speakers.
3. Has Town Counsel determined how the BOS is to present article amendments on the ballot? Must all be listed? In what order? If not all must be listed, how will BOS select which will?

Arnold C. Coda
400 Gould Hill Road
Hopkinton NH 03229

3. Hello Mr. Moderator,
I'm writing to support the proposed town budget as well as looking into selling the Bates building. I am not in favor of SB2.

Thank you for all of the hard work you and the Select Board and Neal have done. You are all appreciated!

Neal, could you please forward my message to the Select Board. Thank you!

Elizabeth Sides
265 Crowell Rd

ARTICLE 3 – Bond Issue for Road, Bridge, and Culvert Rehabilitation

Comments:

1. Submitted by:
Scott Zipke
188 West Ridge Circle

It is unconscionable to me that the town select board is asking for a 2nd road bond of approximately \$2mil within 4 years of the initial bond - all during the time of massive upheaval with the school budget. These two budgets do NOT live in vacuums, incomparable to each other. Fact of the matter is that this road bond will increase my tax rate by about 30 cents for just a handful of road repairs while the ENTIRE (pared down) school budget would increase my tax rate by only about 7 cents.

To ask for, or to vote for, fixing of culverts to the tune of millions of dollars when the townspeople refuse to fund even a very basic and pared down school operating budget is the height of hypocrisy.

Respectfully submitted,
Scott Zipke

2. Mr Moderator,

I find it mind-boggling, unfathomable and sad that Hopkinton has reached a situation where we're proposing a zero-year solution for our schools, while at the same time proposing a 100-year solution for our road culverts.

Josh Kattf
Moran Rd.

Amendments:

1. Mr. Moderator:

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B. Article 3: Bond Issue for Road Repair

1. Even without the report titled "A Status Hopkinton's Roads (Update 1.20.20 dbh)" and that contains Dan Blanchette's information, it is evident that a number of Town roads are badly in need of repair and/or rebuilding. The Town has deferred addressing the need for years. We now are at the point that need can no longer be ignored. In considering a bond issue, we need additional information:

- a. Some roads require complete reconstruction that includes drainage work. Gould Hill Road is prime example of this situation. Yet, the referenced report does not specify "reconstruction" or drainage. There is the category "RECLAIM AND REBUILD". The BOS needs to explain what that means. Is needed drainage included?
- b. The review of roads and cost estimates now are some 9 months old. Should they be up-dated? Should the Town retain a consultant for this work?
- c. Is our DPW is equipped to do some/all of the work. Moreover, it has and will have other work and projects to undertake. Will it have time to undertake the listed work. Is the work going to be bid to road contractors? All or some?

2. I present two amendments to Article 3 and request that both be presented to voters on the ballot:

- a. I move to amend Article 3 as follows: Increase the amount to be bonded by \$3,200,000, with the total then being \$5,000,000.
- b. I move to amend Article 3 as follows: Increase the amount to be bonded by \$400,000, with the total then being \$2,200,000.

Arnold C. Coda
400 Gould Hill Road
Hopkinton NH 03229

ARTICLE 4 – Adoption of Official Ballot Referendum Form of Meeting (SB2)

Comments:

1. Dear Mr. Ellsworth:

My name is Patricia Sangillo and I live at 8 Winter Drive in The Meadows in Contoocook NH. I attended last night's Virtual Town Meeting via YouTube.

Regarding SB2 I am against it. However, I also sympathize with the elderly and disabled being unable to endure the length of our face-to-face town meetings. Next year would it be possible to have a hybrid meeting (face-to-face with live streaming)? I realize the issue would be how those on stream would then vote—but we have a year to figure that out. Also, under the current statutes, would NH state law allow such a meeting—with or without the ability to vote?

Thank you for a well run and informative meeting last night.

Blessings,
Pat Sangillo

ARTICLE 5 – Operating Budget

Amendments:

1. I am making a **Motion To Amend Article 5:**
Move to reduce the Operating Budget of \$7,703,736 by **\$74,739**, thus removing the Merit Increases completely. The new budget number under this motion would then be **\$7,628,997**. Given that many of our townspeople have lost or have seen a severe reduction in income, it hardly seems fair to grant raises to town employees. Most industries have either eliminated raises or have given only a token raise (1%).

Kind Regards,
Judi Case
1030 Briar Hill Road
Hopkinton NH 03229

ARTICLE 6 – Appropriation to Capital Reserve Funds

Comments:

1. Good morning. I have a question on **Article 6**: Should the town vote against selling the Bates Building, would the \$12,500 listed for Town Hall Renovations still be needed?

Kind Regards,
Judi Case
1030 Briar Hill Road
Hopkinton NH 03229

2. Mr. Moderator:

Here are my responses relative to the Warrant as presented and discussed via the Zoom meeting on July 20,2020.

C. Article 6: Appropriation to Capital Reserve Funds for Library Building Systems, \$20,000

Library Director Donna Dunlap has given me the list of items included in this request. I believe that these items should have been included in work done after the lightening strike fire, whether or not they were covered by insurance recovery. There were generous contributions from citizens toward costs at that time. Quite possibly, contributors would have kicked in another \$20,000. If so, there would not be a tax burden now. Please have the BOS address this Article with specificity.

Arnold C. Coda
400 Gould Hill Road
Hopkinton NH 03229

ARTICLE 7 – Appropriation to Expendable Trust Funds

Comments:

1. Mr. Moderator:

Here are my responses relative to the Warrant as presented and discussed via the Zoom meeting on July 20,2020.

D. Article 7: Appropriation to Expendable Trust Funds for Library Building and Grounds, \$41,000

Per Director Dunlop, this is for re-staining the exterior. The exterior has not been done since original construction in 1998. Why? This is akin to Town roads not being maintained routinely. Is there no plan for routine maintenance - staining/painting, included? Is there such a plan now?

Arnold C. Coda
400 Gould Hill Road
Hopkinton NH 03229

ARTICLE 8 – Authorization to Sell the Bates Building

Comments:

1. Hi Bruce

Listening to the discussion last night, I am convinced there are very few people that want to see the Bates Building sold. There is really no viable plan to replace the vault for the Town Records, and we do not have a good solution for the Town Clerk/ Tax collector office. The Town Hall is not a suitable building to transform into a modern office building, and what has already been done has ruined the historical value of the building. Parking is not suitable with using the side of Main St. especially in the winter. The Town Clerk has asked to be moved back to the Bates Building several times, but the Select Board ignores her issues. The supervisors of the checklist need a place to work, and keep their records, which is not available in the Town Hall. I think we need to listen to the people that are going to be affected, not people that just want to see a change.

I urge you and the Select Board to pass over this article for now, and let the Town Clerk/ Tax Collector, Supervisors of The Checklist, and the Historical Records Committee work on a solution for these issues. My idea , next year is to plan ahead and start saving for a new Town Office building, starting a Capitol Reserve Fund, and within a few years build a modern office building with a concrete/steel vault for the records, and an energy efficient building that would serve this town for years to come. The ideal location would be in the open field in front of the Library on Houston Drive, where there is plenty of room for both building and parking.

This issue came about due to REACTION instead of being PROACTIVE to an issue, and in my mind has caused a lot of problems that were not thought thru.

Other than this, I want to tell you that you seem to have adapted to the new and improved way of conducting town meeting, which proves an old saying isn't always true, "that you can't teach an old dog new tricks"! Enjoy your retirement!

Thank you

Lester Cressy
341 Park Ave
Contoocook NH 03229

2. Dear Mr. Ellsworth:

My name is Patricia Sangillo and I live at 8 Winter Drive in The Meadows in Contoocook NH. I attended last night's Virtual Town Meeting via YouTube.

Article 8

Even though I am not in favor of selling the Bates building at this time, regarding the secure storage of the Town's archival materials:

Is it possible to build a fireproof vault somewhere in the new Hopkinton Library building? Since the new library is on a hill and if it has a basement and the basement is beneath the hill, would it be easier to put a secure vault there?

Thank you for a well run and informative meeting last night.

Blessings,
Pat Sangillo

3. Mr. Moderator, my name is Roland Dubois, 146 Penacook Road, Contoocook. I have the following comments related to Warrant Article 8.

1. A commenter at the recent zoom meeting suggested that the Town of Hopkinton owns a number of properties in addition to the Bates building that could potentially be sold to generate revenue, without impacting existing Town uses. Such properties may have been acquired through donation, or as a result of non-payment of taxes, or otherwise. Aside from the property adjacent to Kimball Pond that is currently rented, and the Kimball cabins and associated land, please identify these properties, if they exist, and explain if there is a particular reason why the Selectboard has focused on selling the Bates building rather than these other properties.

2. Historically, the High School and Columbia Hall, together with the Bates building and the Fire Station, represented a considerable Town presence in the center of downtown Contoocook. With two of these four buildings now gone, the Bates building takes on added importance for the Town. The building could be put to myriad beneficial uses in the future as the Town develops. The potential uses are not all knowable at this time, but the building can and should be retained by the Town as a strategically-located resource that can be adapted to future needs.

4. Mr. Moderator:

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E. Article 8: Authorization to Sell Bates Building

Do not sell the building until there is a secure and totally fireproof area, whether a vault or room, for storage of records currently existing and future records that are required to be kept and those the Town wishes to keep. Is there NH statute that defines requirements for such a space?

Arnold C. Coda
400 Gould Hill Road
Hopkinton NH 03229

5. Ralph Case
1030 Briar Hill Road
Hopkinton, NH 03229

Regarding Article 8, I would like more financial information to make an informed decision on authorizing the sale of the Bates Building.

What is the current financial impact to the town of carrying the building?

- Annual operating and other expenses
- Rent and other income received

What is the expected financial impact from the sale?

- Net proceeds from the sale
- Costs associate with the sale (subdivision, etc.) and with adapting to continuing town business without the building (moving the safe, finding other spaces for meetings, etc.)

Thank you

6. Mr Moderator: I would like to ask that Article 8 be tabled by the Selectman. There is a lack of planning both at Bates and the Town Hall. The building was given to the town and a very well constructed vault was built for all of the valuable old records of the Town. If the property is subdivided and sold it also eliminates parking spaces used by the events in the village and the churches.

It is time to stop chopping up our beautiful Town Hall and put the offices back so they are accessible not squeeze more into the building.

Sue Strickford
801 Main Street

ARTICLE 12 – Modification of Solar Exemption

Amendments:

1. Gary Garvin, 515 Bound Tree Road

Dear Mr. Moderator,

After listening to Steven Whitney's presentation of Article 12: Modification of Solar Exemption, at the Zoom meeting Monday evening, I question why the Select Board would be increasing the tax exemption for solar energy systems. I was under the impression that many town budgets were cut or reduced this year due to the uncertainty of tax payers ability to pay property taxes. If the tax exemption for solar installations increases, it means the tax rate will have to rise to make up the difference. I do understand that the original exemption may be low, but increasing it to a value of five times greater seems excessive and unfair to tax payers who may not be able install solar due to location/lack of sun exposure or price of installing a system. In order to help those who have already invested or are planning to install a solar energy system, I would like to make a motion to amend Article 12 to increase the exemption from \$5000 to \$10,000. The Article would read as follows:

Article 12: Modification of Solar Exemption

Shall the Town adopt the provisions of RSA 72:61-64 inclusively, which provide for an optional property tax exemption from the property's assessed value, for property tax purposes, for persons owning real property, which is equipped with solar energy systems intended for use at the immediate site. Such property tax exemption shall be in the amount equal to 100% of the assessed value up to \$10,000 of qualifying solar energy system equipment under these statutes.

It would also be helpful to know how many tax payers have applied for the solar energy system exemption. With that information a tax impact could be figured before and after a modification to the warrant article passes.

Candie Garvin, 515 Bound Tree Road seconded the motion.

Thank you for your consideration.

Gary Garvin

ARTICLE 13 – Modify LUCT Percentage Allocated to Conservation Fund

Amendments:

1. Hi Bruce. I would like to propose the following amendment to Article 13: in place of “100%”, substitute “50%”.

Thank you.

Mark Zankel
485 Crowell Road
Hopkinton, NH 03229

Full Text of Comments for those that commented on more than one article in their comments

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